Scanned

Pest Alert

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest Service

Northeastern Area

NA-FB-35 10/89

CRYPHONECTRIA CANKER OF OAK

Swollen butt on infected black oak

Basal canker on white oak

Bole and basal cankers on scarlet oak

Cryphonectria (=Endothia) parasitica, the fungus responsible for chestnut blight, is also known to attack various oak species causing the formation of damaging cankers on stems and branches. While it rapidly kills native chestnut trees and stump sprouts, oaks are more resistant to infection and may live for years. Basal cankers on scarlet oak may range in size from small indistinct cankers to "swollen butts" composed of large irregular areas of curved or involuted bark, callus formation, and distorted wood. Orange fungal fruiting structures are sometimes present but difficult to detect. Small pieces of buff-colored mycelium (fungal tissues) may be found if the bark is carefully removed from recessed portions of the canker. Bole cankers may also be present. Cankers on white oak may be identified by the presence of orange fungal tissue. Post oak cankers are characterized by distinct orange-buff mycelium and the presence of pycnidia on the undersurface of loose bark. Live oak trees throughout the deep South are also attacked and similar cankers are formed on the stems.

Cross section of swollen butt (scarlet oak)
Note: Orange mycelium

Bruce Nash, Penn State University
James T. O'Brien, USDA Forest Service

For further information contact your County Agricultural Agent, State Forester, State Pathologist, or State Extension Specialist.